

Properly Screening Recruiters for Assignment to Recruiting Duty

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Properly Screening Recruiters for Assignment to Recruiting
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To Majors Saunders and Bragg
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Introduction

In January 2005 the Marine Corps missed its monthly recruiting mission for the first time in more than nine years. Being a Marine Corps recruiter is a difficult job that requires such traits as maturity and confidence. Currently, however, the Marine Corps does not select the most highly qualified candidates to be recruiters because its screening process is flawed and inadequate. The Marine Corps should screen its recruiters more rigorously by using personal interviews and personality tests. With more qualified recruiters, the Marine Corps will be able to reach its recruiting mission.

Every Marine regardless of whether or not he is a volunteer should undergo the same level of screening for recruiting duty. It is important to standardize the screening process in order to avoid having recruiters with significantly different skill levels on recruiting duty. The standardization of the screening process can only be done by the Headquarters Recruiter Screening Team (HRST).

Interviews

Every potential recruiter must be interviewed by the HRST. These interviews must be thorough, decisive, and meaningful. They should never be purely administrative.

Additionally if the Marine is married his spouse must be required to be a part of the interview.

The United States Air Force Recruiter Screening Team screens every applicant for recruiting duty. This screening process is purposely rigorous and extensive, designed to ensure the best possible person/job match and likelihood of success as an Air Force Recruiter. This process includes review of candidate's application, Enlisted Performance Report (EPR) history, credit check, medical records review of member/family, Unit Commander's Recommendation, and extensive interviews.¹

In 1998 the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed the military's recruiter incentive system used to optimize the performance of military recruiters and ensure that only fully qualified applicants are enlisted. One-third of the investigation focused on how each service screened, selected, and trained recruiters. It found that the Air Force was the only service that used experienced senior recruiters to interview candidates for recruiting positions. "The Air Force has the most extensive screening program, relying heavily on a team of experienced senior recruiters to interview candidates."² The report recommends using senior experienced recruiters to personally interview all potential recruiters and use communication skills as

¹USAF Special Duty Assignment-Recruiter
http://www.military.com/MilitaryCareers/Content/0,14556,MPDC_Options_SD_A_RD_AirForce_Enlisted,00.html

² U. S. General Accounting Office, Report to the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Military Recruiting, DOD Could Improve Its Recruiter Selection And Incentive Systems, 1998, 4. Cited here after as U. S. GAO, DOD Could Improve Its Recruiter Selection And Incentive Systems.

the key criteria for recruiter selection. The Department of Defense (DOD) supported this recommendation. Although the report proves that interviews are necessary to identify unqualified Marines for recruiting duty, the Marine Corps still fails to use proper interviews as part of its screening process. A pool of recruiters who have been thoroughly interviewed and screened mentally for pure recruiting talent is an asset for the Recruiting Station Commander and the Marine Corps.

"Experienced senior recruiters know what questions to ask."³ They have gone through the screening process, have recruited for more than three years, and have managed other recruiters. With that much experience as a senior recruiter it is fitting that only they should decide who will follow in their footsteps.

"A Marine recruiter usually works more than fifteen hours per day, six days per week."⁴ With as much time as a recruiter will be expected to spend at the office during the day it is important to determine early in the screening process if his marriage can withstand that much time away from each other. The inability of the marriage to withstand that much time apart due to work schedule should

³ MsGySgt Thomas E. Hanner, Interview Concerning the Number of Hours per Week that a Recruiter works (16 December 2005).

⁴ MsGySgt Thomas E. Hanner, Interview Concerning the Number of Hours per Week that a Recruiter works (16 December 2005).

be discovered before it becomes detrimental to the recruiting effort. One spouse wrote that,

On recruiting duty wonderful working hours initially with no deployments soon turned into sixteen hour days. Almost immediately, he wasn't able to come home for dinner. There is no time for it. He most often ends up eating fast food. My husband missed our daughter's first day of school because he was deployed to Afghanistan. He had no choice. He missed our second daughter's first holiday concert because a seventeen year old applicant had an appointment and didn't show up. I was livid. But it was just the beginning. He is constantly at the mercy of seventeen and eighteen year old kids. Even if they do show an interest in joining the Marine Corps, he still has to win their parent's support.⁵

The spouse of a Marine on recruiting duty is that Marine's support system. As a result of this the spouse must also be included in the interview process. During the interview the support system should be found to be intact. This will at a minimum give the Marine one less challenge in an already challenging recruiting environment.

Personality Tests

Every recruiter should undergo a personality test. Personality tests have been used successfully to predict performance of potential employees in the workforce.

The Air Force noting the results of studies of private salespeople began investigating the possibility of using a personality assessment test to screen potential recruiters. After administering a commercially developed biographical screening test to 1,171 recruiters, the Air Force recruiters with certain traits were much more likely to succeed than recruiters who lacked those traits. These traits, in order of importance, were assertiveness, empathy, self-regard (awareness of strengths and weaknesses), problem-solving ability, happiness and optimism, interpersonal relations, emotional self-awareness (ability to

⁵Thompson, Kelly, A Wife's perspective on Recruiting Duty, Marine Corps Times, (23 January 2006), 46.

recognize one's feelings), and reality testing (ability to distinguish between what you see and what is). The study also found that high performers worked the least number of hours and reported higher marital satisfaction and that neither the recruiter's geographic region nor zone was a factor in predicting recruiter success.⁶

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test measures an applicant's aptitude for initial occupational field placement (the recruiting field excluded), prior to enlistment. However, only the Air Force uses personality tests to evaluate an individual's aptitude for recruiting. The Air Force purchased the personality test in November 1997 and began using it to test prospective recruiters. Personality tests have also worked very well in the private sector in predicting the performance of potential employee. "Before investing in a company, you can predict how a senior executive or management team will perform by constructing a personality profile of that manager or team."⁷

Personality tests for recruiters will be quick and accurate and they can also save a lot of money for the Marine Corps. An hour long personality test can be given to several potential recruiters at one time. Best of all

⁶ U. S. GAO, DOD Could Improve Its Recruiter Selection And Incentive Systems, 1998, 17.

⁷ Dr. Duff Watkins, "Predicting Performance in People: Going from Good to Great," The Australian Venture Capital Journal, June 2004, 35.

since it is computerized instant results will be provided on each Marine tested.

Personality tests are accurate because they measure things that do not change. Personality is stable after age six, cognitive abilities are largely inherited, and interpersonal styles are habitual. Even your capacity for happiness is mostly genetic. These traits and characteristics are easily measured. And they are the basis on which a person manages other people, runs a business and interacts with the world. That's why it is useful to measure them.⁸

Per the 1998 United States GAO report, the Air Force purchased its personality screening test for less than the cost of putting one recruiter in the field. A similar investment by the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) into personality test for recruiters would be useful in predicting recruiter performance. Personality tests have been proven to work. "More than 231 studies in both the US and Europe, over 85 years, confirm that personality test consistently predict job performance well."⁹

The Need for Change

Recruiting duty is, uniquely challenging and highly demanding. Individuals with good communication skills who are mature, self-confident, trustworthy, and cooperative will make the difference in the type of individuals

⁸ Dr. Duff Watkins, "Predicting Performance in People: Going from Good to Great," The Australian Venture Capital Journal, June 2004, 35.

⁹ Dr. Duff Watkins, "Predicting Performance in People: Going from Good to Great," The Australian Venture Capital Journal, June 2004, 35.

recruited to join the Marine Corps. "The potential recruiter must also be mature, self-confident, trustworthy, and cooperative. Marines should present an exceptional appearance, be self-starters, and possess good judgment."¹⁰

According to Lieutenant General Jack W. Klimp, the Marine Corps is not the service of choice. "More than 90 percent of all enlistees had no idea that they might one day want to become a Marine until after meeting a Marine recruiter,"¹¹ As a result, recruiters have to be smart and vigilant.

Conclusion

In order to prevent missed monthly missions in the future and continue to keep the Marine Corps strong, the Corps must identify high-quality recruiters by conducting thorough interviews and administer personality test for all potential recruiters. This will permit the selection of Marines with the highest probability of success for assignment to recruiting duty. Effective screening and selection of Marines for recruiting duty is critical to the continued success of the recruiting effort. Improving the recruiter selection screening process will reduce the

¹⁰ MCO P1326.6D CH1, B-1.

¹¹ LtGen Jack W. Klimp, USMC, U. S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, USMC Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Before the Personnel Subcommittee, *Personnel Issues*, (24 March 1999), 2. Cited hereafter as U. S. Congress, *Personnel Issues*.

number of Marines on recruiting duty who under normal circumstances are awesome Marines but who simply cannot recruit.

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